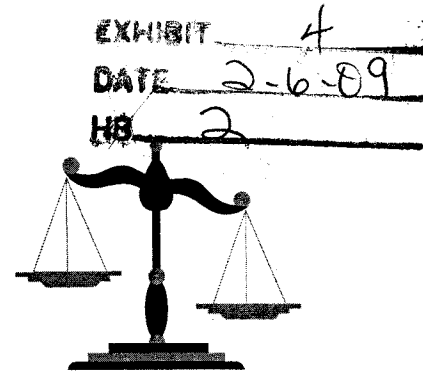


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February 5, 2009

Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement, and Justice Subcommittee

RE: Judicial Branch Budget

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is in opposition to the proposed \$1 million reduction in the Juvenile Delinquency Intervention Program (JDIP), as contained in H.B. 2. The 11th Judicial District is currently allocated \$558,635.00 annually - 12.52% of the statewide JDIP allocation. As proposed, the \$1 million reduction to JDIP would result in a 22.4% (\$125,200.00) reduction in the 11th Judicial District's portion of JDIP funding.

The reduction, as proposed, will have a significant negative impact on the ability of Youth Court to effectuate the declaration of purpose of the Montana Youth Court Act, which mandates providing for the "...care, protection, and wholesome mental and physical development of a youth...to prevent and reduce youth delinquency...a program of supervision, care, rehabilitation, competency development, and community protection for youth before they become adult offenders". Medically necessary out-of-home placements and outpatient psychiatric, psychological, and chemical dependency services for youths declared to be delinquent, in need of intervention, or serious juvenile offenders are essential interventions in achieving the express legislative purposes of the Youth Court Act. Without access to those services, those youth will pose a greater risk to re-offend in the community, as well as continuing to engage in self-destructive behavior, placing them at greater risk for self-harm.

The likely outcome of reduced JDIP funding will be increased commitment of youth to correctional facilities, and though certainly warranted in some cases, such commitments may not necessarily be in the best interests of the youth or community when a youth might be more effectively treated in a specialized therapeutic treatment facility.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter and the negative impacts such a reduction in funding can and will have on youth, their families, and our community.

Respectfully,

Nick Nyman
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer